News from the FPPC

California Fair Political Practices Commission
428 J Street, Suite 620, Sacramento, CA 95814
www.fppc.ca.gov

For Immediate Release: June 19, 2008

Contact: Roman Porter at (916) 322-7761

Independent Expenditures Grow to $100 Million

Committees Signal their Intent to Candidates

A small number of well-funded special interests have poured nearly $100 million into "independent expenditures" benefiting candidates for state office since voters placed limits on the size of direct contributions to candidates.

The state's Fair Political Practices Commission has updated its report on independent expenditures to include spending in the June 2008 primary election, which totaled $11,783,605. Combined with the $88,088,500 spent on independent expenditures from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2006, the total for all independent expenditures spent on behalf of state and legislative candidates is $99,872,105.

The newly updated report, ***Independent Expenditures: The Giant Gorilla in Campaign Finance***, provides information on the ten legislative races where independent expenditure spending was the highest in the June 2008 primary elections. Those contests include the 25th Senate District Democratic primary where independent expenditure spending totaled $1,782,901, the 3rd Senate District Democratic primary where IE spending totaled $1,445,155, and the 8th Assembly District Democratic primary where IE spending totaled $1,153,674.

"Increasingly, special interest contributors funnel their support for candidates through so-called 'independent expenditure committees,' rather than giving the money directly to candidates," stressed Ross Johnson, Chairman of the Fair Political Practices Commission. "Since independent expenditure committees can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money, this trend thwarts the will of the voters who imposed contribution limits on candidates by overwhelmingly approving Proposition 34 on the November 2000 ballot."

Independent expenditures pay for communications (e.g., a billboard, advertisement, mailing, television and radio commercials) that expressly advocate the nomination, election, or defeat of a clearly identified candidate, but which is not made to, or at the behest of, a candidate.

"What is most disturbing is the alarming emergence of new techniques identified in the report where candidate-specific independent expenditure committees are created that may signal candidates in advance of elections that there will be independent expenditures on their behalf," Johnson noted. "The real losers in this explosive growth of independent expenditures are the voters of California because independent expenditure committees are getting better at masking the true source of their contributions."

—more—

Limits were imposed on contributions made directly to candidates for legislative and statewide office by Proposition 34 passed in November of 2000. Contribution limits went into effect on January 1, 2001, for legislative candidates and November 6, 2002, for statewide candidates. These limits do not apply to independent expenditures. These expenditures must be made completely "independent" of the candidate; no coordination can take place between the candidates or their campaigns and the entity that makes the independent expenditure.

The Fair Political Practices Commission is helping to ensure the public's right to know which interests are funding political campaigns. Full disclosure allows voters to make informed decisions before casting their ballots. During the 2008 June primary election, the FPPC posted on its website information on independent expenditure spending in the 26 open contested legislative races. The commission will continue to detail independent expenditure spending on its website during the 2008 general elections.

# # #

* * * Note to Editors * * *

The June 2008 version of this report supersedes any information contained in previous versions. This June 2008 version should be used as the sole reference, unless and until any newer version is published by the Commission.